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Homo erectus and the dawn of Man.

Moments before First Contact...











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A Gift From the Gods
Part 1
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How many?

Six.

Do we need so many?

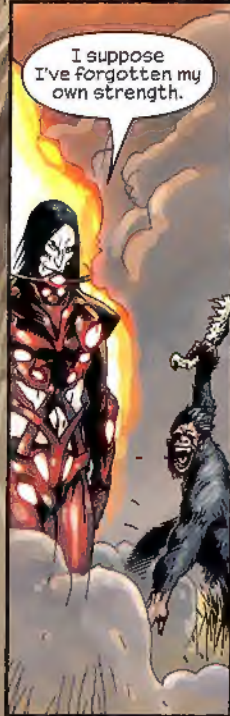


EEEEEEE!!!
SHOOOM!
RONK! RONK!









FSSSSH




You enjoy this a bit too much, Kurassus.
Is that a character flaw, you think?



On board the Eternals' Space Ship...

What are you putting it in, Jekkarta?

Is that re-sequencing chamber three?

Yes, this is three.

One and two are down at the moment due to overuse on the last world.

Well, if this works, you'll need to get them repaired so we can maximize re-sequencing.





RRRMMMM
Oo. Oo.
FSHAAAAAA
SKREEEEEEEEE!
When there's this much pain and malformation at the beginning, it almost *always* means failure.
Almost always.
Why, you're *right,* Ikaeden. Isn't *that* a pretty sight.
It's evolving into a *lovely* specimen and will be working diligently in *no* time.

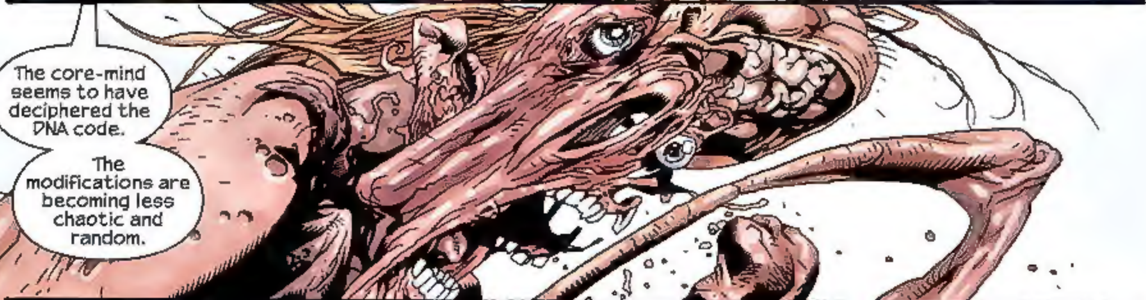

Anyone ever tell you your *sarcasm* is irritating as hell, Kurassus?
You do. All the time.
I'll stop the procedure and put the thing out of its misery.


Why?
It will die soon, anyway. It's so fascinating to watch.
You're too oversensitive with the animals, Ikaeden.


Tell Jekkarta to bring up the reserve deviants for duplication.
We'll try a few more, but it looks as if we'll have to use our imported work force--
--and possibly exterminate the local dominant fauna--


Wait!

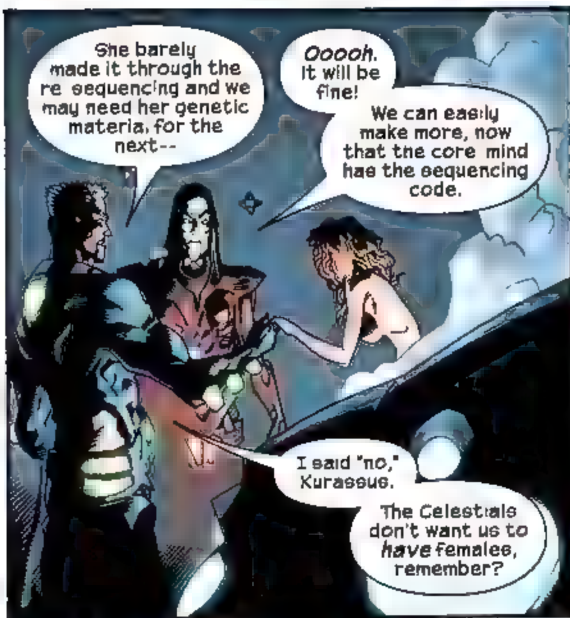

The transformation is calming.
The distortions are lessening.


The core-mind seems to have deciphered the DNA code.
The modifications are becoming less chaotic and random.


Incredible.
It actually has more similarity to we Eternals than previous deviants.
A lot more similarity.


And some rather charming differences.


Can I have it?
No, Kurassus.


She barely made it through the re sequencing and we may need her genetic materia, for the next--
Ooooh. It will be fine!
We can easily make more, now that the core mind has the sequencing code.
I said "no," Kurassus.
The Celest als don't want us to *have* females, remember?


The Ce est als aren't here, are they?
Our Gods are far beh nd us in space, rece ving the fruits of our abor
It s amaz ng. Even the vag na opening and other orifices are what I remember them to be on Eterna women


Ggrrah!
She even *feels* like an Eterna female.
But it *is still* a deviant, and therefore the chances of loving t, impregnating it and civ zing--
--then one day challeng ng the Ce est als authority are *ridiculous,* rea ly.
It would be nothing more than a *sex doll.*


And we al know how you've treated your dev ant "sex dolls" in the past...*don't we,* Kurassus?
GRRRRRR..


Is that what you object to? My sexual *tastes?*
What do you care how I treat deviants, Ikaeden? They're just *animals!*

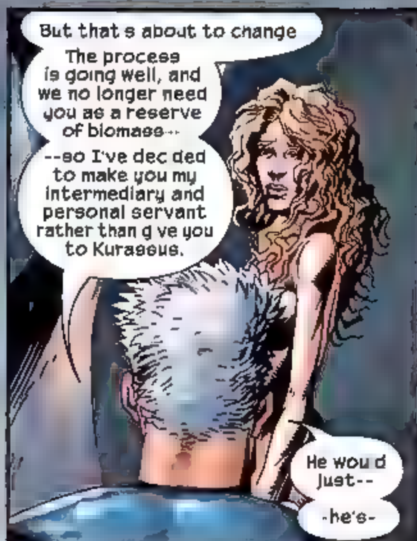

Fine, if you want one, I'll *make* you one, Kurassus, I'll make us *all one*--
Wuh wuh wuh!


--*after* we've determined the process rep icable.
It's not about concern for these creatures, it's just too much work.
So for now we keep this one safe.

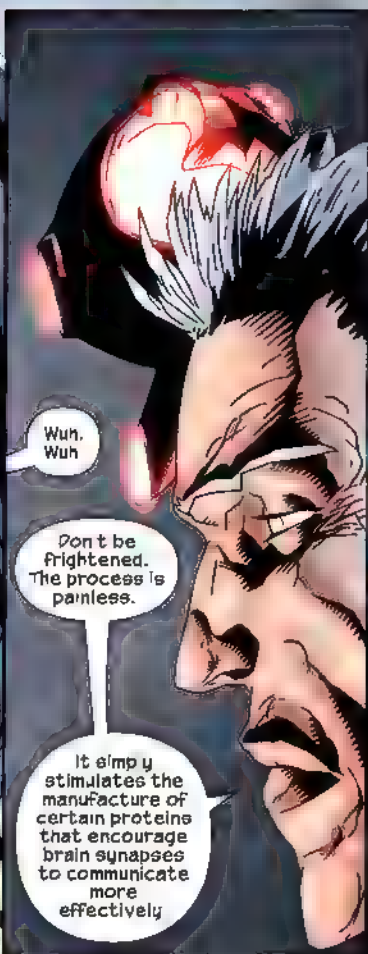



Days later...
Yes. That is *you*, now


You are changed.
We are changing many of your genetic brothers and sisters, even as we speak.
Or rather, as *I* speak and *you* fail to comprehend

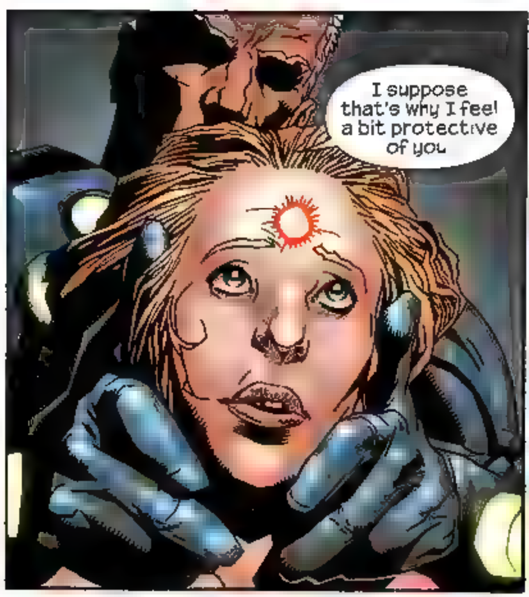

But that's about to change
The process is going well, and we no longer need you as a reserve of biomass--
--so I've decided to make you my intermediary and personal servant rather than give you to Kurasseus.
He would just--
-he's-

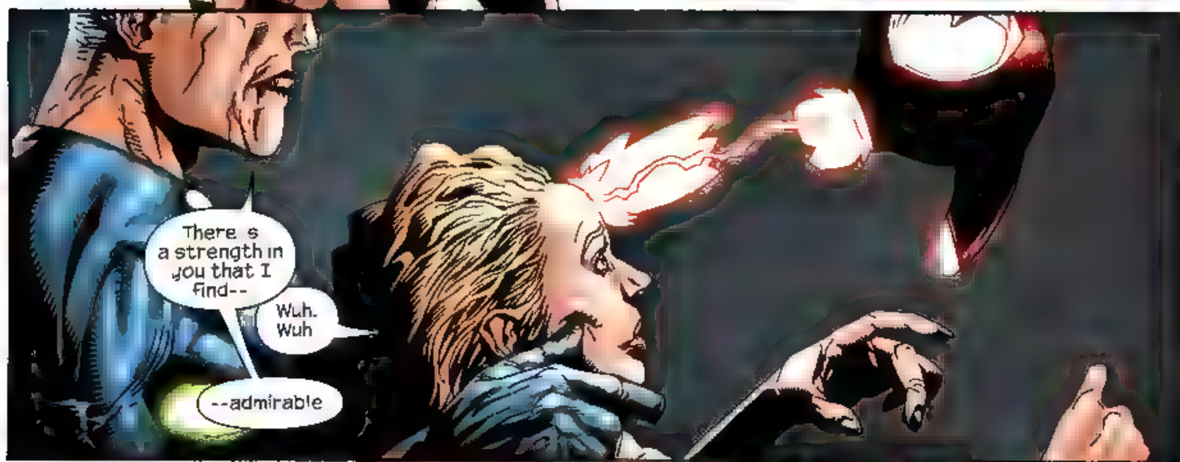

This device is the Apple. It can instill a certain amount of knowledge in your mind-
--just enough for you to comprehend basic instructions
--simple commands--


Wuh. Wuh
Don't be frightened. The process is painless.
It simply stimulates the manufacture of certain proteins that encourage brain synapses to communicate more effectively


Then it overlays holographic information across your cerebral cortex to allow rudimentary language skills.
Wuh, Wuh, Wuh.
I'm babbling, aren't I?
I had hoped my calm demeanor might help you be less frightened, but I expect too much, don't I?


But even without a common language and frame-work, you've done remarkably well.
Wuh, Wuh, Wuh.


I suppose that's why I feel a bit protective of you


There's a strength in you that I find--
Wuh. Wuh
--admirable


There.
That was painless, wasn't it?
You should be able to comprehend me, now.
Wuh, wuh.
Wuh, wuh, wuh.


Good. Perfect.
But there's no need for displays of physical appreciation toward me.
You're still to be subservient to me, in all ways.
Really. It's not--
--Eternals are above this kind of thing, and--


Well, all right.
I suppose it will only make you work better.
Wuh, Wuh, Wuh

Three months after First Contact...

The slave workers are ahead of schedule.

These deviants work harder than any other race we've evolved on any of our previous missions on other worlds.

But *our* people are *behind*.

We could off-load the maximum capacity of ore and raw materials to the mother-ship within the week--

--*if* the men would occasionally remove their penises from the female deviants you've given them.

But you were the first to request a female, Kurasaue.

How can you *blame* them?

You know they've all been isolated with only the company of other Eternal men for thousands of years.

You've been mating with things less like us than these deviants for *centuries* now.

Because they are all *"things"* to me. Let the men use the deviant females all they want.

But several of them have fallen in *love* with their deviant toys, Ikaeden. Which is nothing short of nauseating.

It's like mating with a *frog*.

But simply having *sex* with a frog is somehow perfectly acceptable?

It's one step removed from masturbation, and that's all.

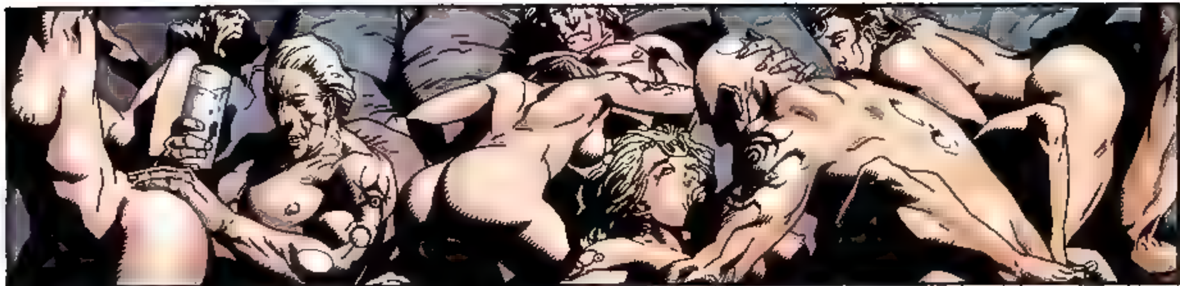
But to *love* a deviant--

--that's just revolting and wrong on *so* many levels, Ikaeden.

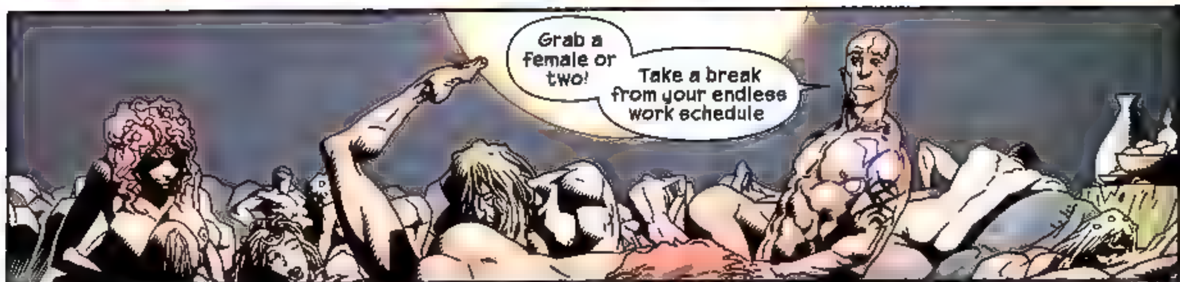




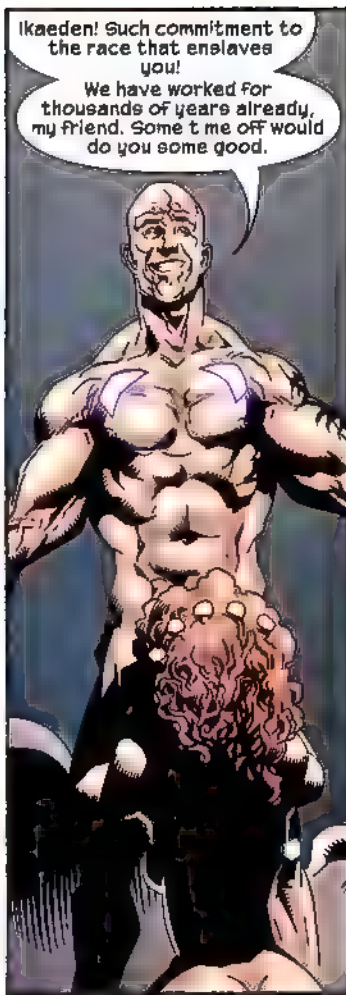


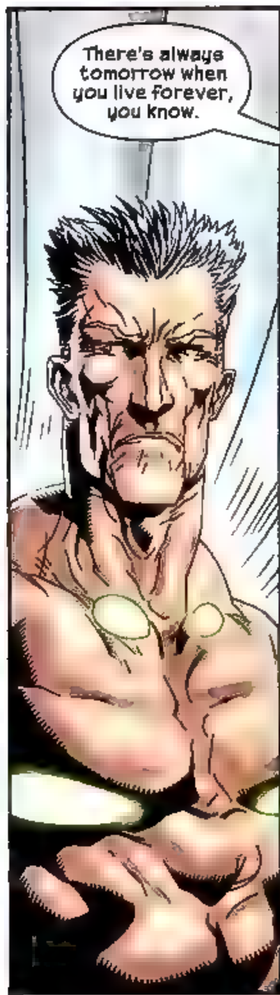



Later in the Eternals' Banquet Hall...
HO, IKAEDEN!


Grab a female or two!
Take a break from your endless work schedule


Break time is over.
You all have work to do.
Ggrrrrr...
Wuh. Wuh Wuh. Wuh

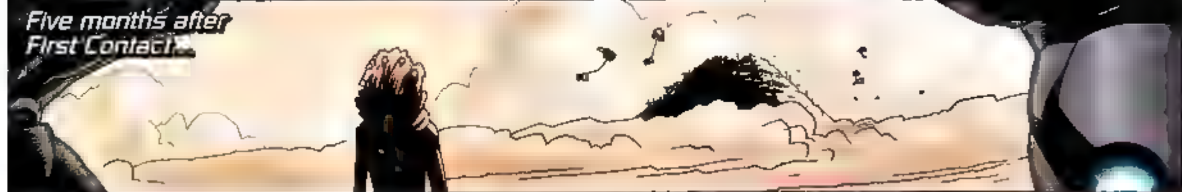

Ikaeden! Such commitment to the race that enslaves you!
We have worked for thousands of years already, my friend. Some t me off would do you some good.


There's always tomorrow when you live forever, you know.

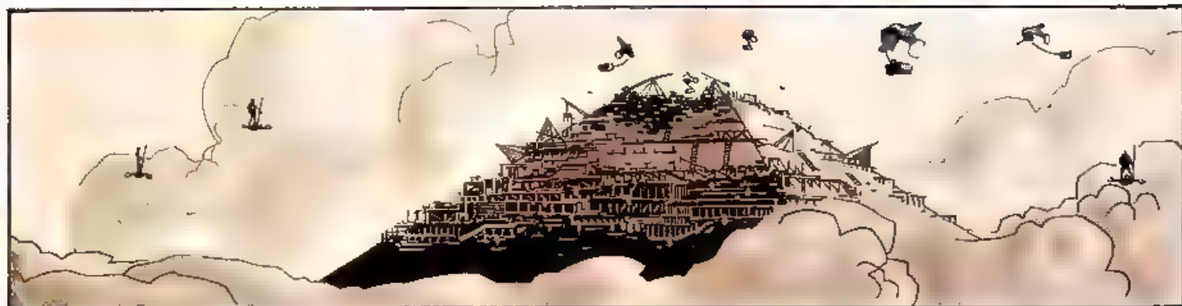


Enough!
I have tolerated this behavior because you have all worked for so long through such misery and loneliness!
But now you take advantage and become careless!

Do you forget how the Celestials killed *half* our population?
All our women?
With one sweeping display of power, our women were destroyed and we were made a lonely race of men cursed with eternal life--
--a life of endless servitude to the Celestials.
You think *they* will tolerate our indulgences?
You think *they* will allow us to fail our schedules of delivery?
You think THEY will look kindly on our impregnating females and procreation--
--when they DESTROYED our women to PREVENT such a thing in the FIRST PLACE?
Clean yourselves.
Dress.
Return to work.
Or it is not only the *Celestials'* anger you will have to face.


Five months after First Contact...


Another one of the deviant females--
--Jekkarta's slave, I believe
--has become pregnant. We'll be forced to deal with her in the usual way




Impressive, isn't it?
A combination map, power source and soul-incubator.
Massively powerful, and quite beautiful, when complete.
Wuh

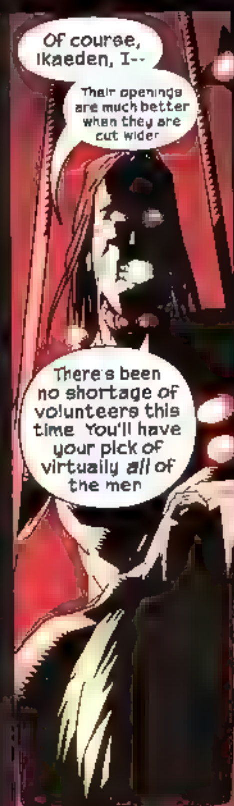

I know, you can't answer me But for some reason just talking at you is more comforting to me than just uttering the basic commands we share.
I need to speak with Kurassus, so come with me
Come.
He's in his quarters and has been for some time


You may want to wait outside his cell while I speak with him.
Stay
Kurassus tastes can be rather--

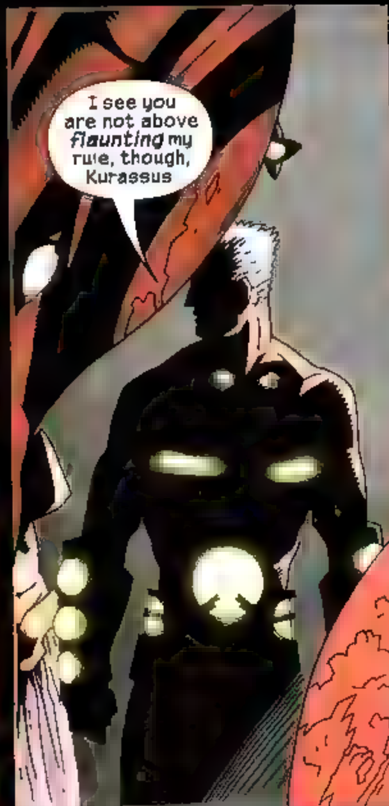

disturbing

Ah, Ikaeden. My commander in chief.
Come in, come in.












Eight months after First Contact...

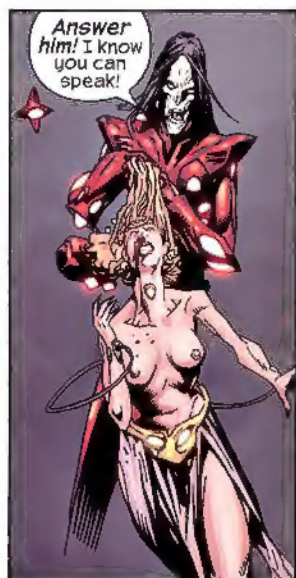

TWEE TWEE
Come in.


I found this--
--actually speaking to one of the others!
Aaah!


Someone gave her access to the core-mind chamber and instilled her with knowledge and language--
--and she refuses to say who!


She used the Apple? How much knowledge? Who did this?
Who gave you the gift of our language?



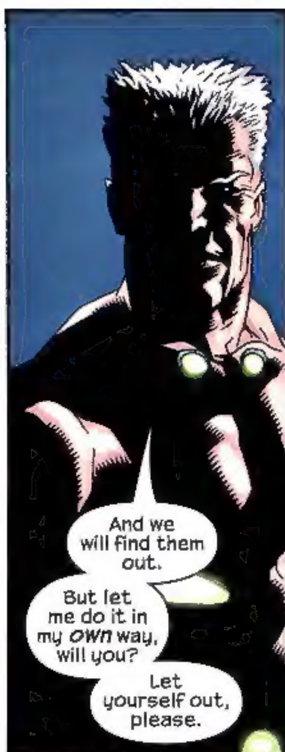

Answer him! I know you can speak!

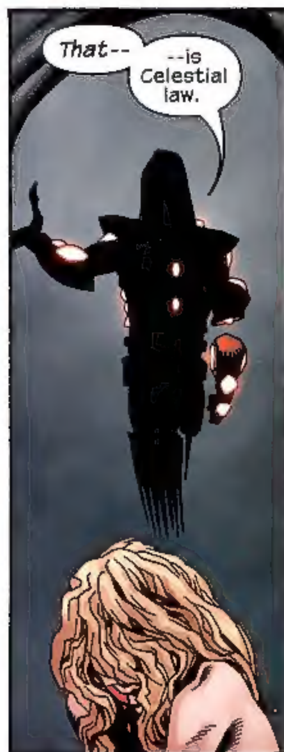

I said ANSWER him--

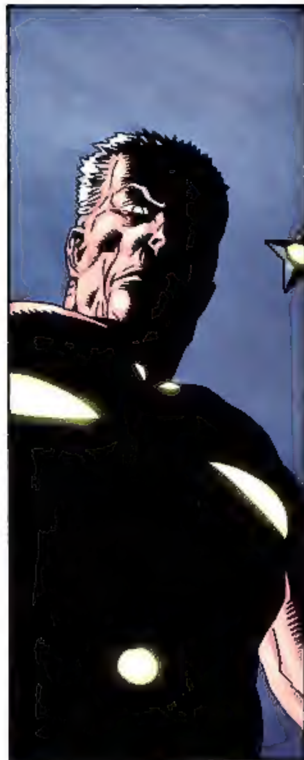
-- AND DO IT NOW --

-- OR I'LL PULL YOUR HEAD FROM YOUR SHOULDERS!

It's all right, Kurassus.
Why don't you give us a moment?
What?
What do you mean it's all right?
Ikaeden, this deviant is being defiant.
We must know who is the traitor in our midst!

Whoever has given your deviant language has endangered all our lives and must be punished. This deviant must be destroyed--
--and the Eternal must be made an example of-- no matter who it may be.

And we will find them out.
But let me do it in my own way, will you?
Let yourself out, please.

No matter who it may be, Ikaeden.

That--
--is Celestial law.



You did this to your-self, didn't you, deviant? You saw how I worked the Apple and went back for more knowledge?
I have chosen a name. "Jeska."
It suits me.

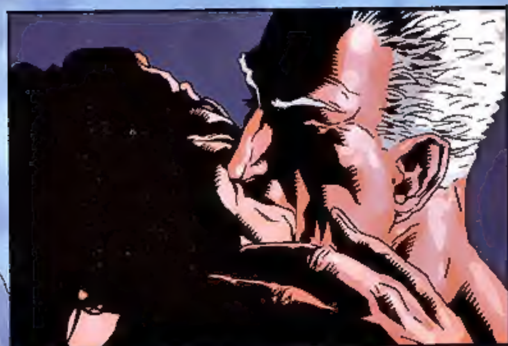
The Celestial word for "fire."
I should say it does.

But since you have tasted of our knowledge--
--you know we cannot allow any deviant to fully speak our language.

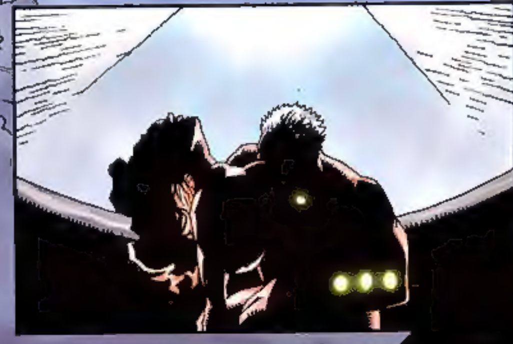
I *had* to have the knowledge, Ikaeden.
I had to be able to *tell* you.

Tell me?
Tell me what?
I had to tell you that I--
--I had to let you know that I--











To Be Continued...